



FALL 2016

POINTS OF INTEREST

★

MENTAL HEALTH & POLICE

★

CODE ENFORCEMENT

FAQ

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WHY WE KEEP THE POLICE LOG

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HERE TO SERVE:

2012 Pacific Ave
Forest Grove, OR
97116

Business Phone:
503-992-3260

Non-emergency
Dispatch:
503-629-0111

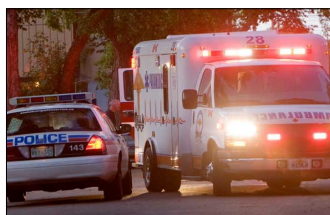
GROVE WATCH

NEWSLETTER OF THE FOREST GROVE POLICE DEPT.

Police Face Challenges with Mental Health

It's a Tuesday afternoon. In the midst of traffic stops and bike thefts, officers respond to a call to intervene in a suicide attempt. A few hours later, officers are called to help a woman threatening to overdose on medication. And when Night Shift takes the road, they check on a known transient arguing loudly with himself and another who believes she's being spied on. And it's a normal day at the FGPD.

Just a glance at the daily police reports is enough to see a growing and disturbing trend. Along with the calls for service covering nearly every problem imaginable are calls revealing a mental health crisis reaching epidemic proportions. Police are responding to real people with real problems stuck in limbo with the current mental health system. Instead of



Police estimate that 30-40% of calls for assistance involve some mental health issue or crisis.

receiving the help they need, individuals are cycling in and out of jail and hospital emergency rooms because of a lack of outpatient resources and treatment options. Consider some of the calls in the recent months:

- A woman called stating she had swallowed a cartridge and now spiders were crawling in her spine (Sept. 1, 2016)

- Officers responded to report that a woman who was found standing in the dark holding four other knives and reportedly hearing voices. She was taken into protective custody and transported to the hospital. (Sept. 2, 2016)

- Police checked on a woman who had claimed she wanted to commit suicide by shooting herself. Officers found bullet holes in the woman's window and learned the woman had overdosed on meds. (Sept. 4, 2016)

- A woman reported a series of burglaries to her home but officers could find no evidence of a break-in. Officers noticed the light fixtures were covered in towels. The homeowner explained that the towels were covering cameras that had been placed in the fixtures and pointed to screws that she believed were the cameras. (Sept 9, 2016)

While it is challenging to precisely say how many calls involve the mentally ill, estimates put it at 30-40 percent. To say this has reached levels that are epidemic still underscores the real impact to first responders.

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In a given day, officers may respond to anything from suicidal threats/attempts to schizophrenic episodes to regular calls from persons with ongoing mental health needs, but often are unable to provide long-term solutions.



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Twenty years ago, calls involving the mentally ill were more of an anomaly. An officer would typically respond to such a call on a monthly basis. Today, officers are dealing with these calls daily. Increases in personnel over the years have failed to adequately cover staffing levels in proportion with the increase in these calls. The accompanying strain on law enforcement and our medical first responders are dangerously exhausting public safety resources. Even a single Peace Officer Hold or “POH”* on an individual demonstrating a risk to themselves or others takes a police officer off the street for one or two hours. This often forces staffing to go below established limits when officer and community safety is compromised. The problem is that matters involving a POH are far too common.

A POH also requires a detailed report that further impacts the time needed for other community law enforcement duties. When a person doesn't meet the criteria for a hold but is still acting out, police often solve the problem with an arrest, typically for charges like disorderly conduct, criminal mischief and criminal trespass. As a result, local jails are increasingly becoming the unfortunate holding place for the mentally ill.

The scenarios described above are due in part to the deinstitutionalization of the state mental health system. While the closure of state institutions resulted in the release of many who shouldn't have been locked up, it's also left countless others struggling to get by and often falling through the cracks with very limited outpatient options available.

Police agencies nationwide are doing the best they can with the resources available. Many departments have ramped up training for officers in dealing with the mentally ill. In Washington County, there is an additional resource—a Mental Health Response Team (MHRT)—that pairs two crisis clinicians with specially-trained patrol deputies from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., seven days a week and a separate Washington County Crisis Team that handles lower-risk cases not requiring an immediate police or medical response.

While the MHRT program has helped in Forest Grove, it's still not enough. The increase in POH cases have more than doubled in the last year. Follow-up calls to check on people released from the jail or hospital have tripled. Calls for service have also tripled.

Society needs to do more to help the mentally ill—but it will take funding. We need more assessment and treatment of those who land in the middle, with a diagnosis. The other key is that solutions must also align with the want and willingness for individuals to get help. But the reality is more than evident: we need a fix and we need one soon. We owe it to the men and woman who suffer from mental illness. We owe it to the police officers who are stressed with increasing call loads and challenged as first responders.

This editorial by Capt. Mike Herb was originally published in the January 14, 2015 edition of the Forest Grove News Times

Code Enforcement: FAQ

Part of law enforcement is keeping the codes and ordinances written in the City laws. The FGPD has a full time Code Enforcement Officer to attend to these laws, as well as graffiti, noise, and parking issues. Here are a few of the vehicle code violations common in Forest Grove:

ABANDONED VEHICLES: A vehicle be classified as abandoned if it has remained in the same location on the public right of way 24 hrs. or longer and has to meet one or more of the following: the vehicle appears inoperative or disabled; appears wrecked, partially dismantled, or junked; or does not display a current registration plate or trip permit. Once a vehicle is deemed as abandoned, it will be tagged for tow notifying the If the vehicle is still there, a request for tow will be submitted. If the vehicle is towed, the registered owner will incur towing and impound fees along with additional penalties.

ILLEGAL DUMPING: any discarded item outside of your own waste bins or garbage cans, especially large and bulky items like furniture, tires, mattresses, etc., is against the law and can bring a hefty fine. Illegal dumping is defined in ORS 164.805 and is a Class C Misdemeanor with penalties assessed at \$1,250 for each offense. There are proper and legal ways to discard unwanted items through waste management services. For questions about dumping items, contact Forest Grove Code Enforcement for any questions at 503-992-3260.

NOISE: All residents of Forest Grove are entitled to a comfortable atmosphere to live, work, play, and rest. Ordinances in our town require that citizens be respectful with their noise, especially in the late evening and early morning. Quiet hours in Forest Grove are from 10 p.m.—7 a.m.

Permits are available for events that may exceed the city limits and may be obtained online at: <http://forestgrove-or.gov/city-hall>

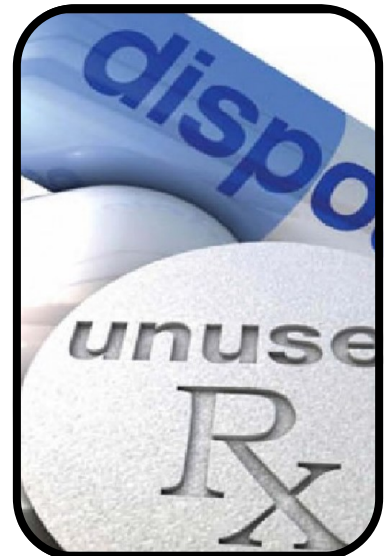


National Drug Take Back Day Oct. 22

Each year the FGPD participates in a national drug-takeback drive as part of an initiative for keeping leftover or expired medication out of watersheds, landfills, and out of the hands of those it doesn't belong to!

This year's event will be held at the Forest Grove Police Department, 2102 Pacific Ave, Forest Grove, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The FGPD also maintains a secure, confidential drop box for all prescription and over the counter medications, including vitamins and pet meds, for safe and environmentally friendly disposal. Items may be simply dropped into our box, packaging and labels included, in the FGPD Lobby. The lobby is open Monday thru Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. **The FGPD does not accept sharps, liquids or inhalers.*



Captain's Corner—the Police Log



Each week, the Forest Grove Police Department releases the latest edition of the “Police Log” to local media outlets. The log is a compilation of some of the odd, unusual and sometimes dangerous calls that city police officers respond to each day; its purpose is to share transparently with our community the types of calls officers are dealing with each day and to give a human perspective to the work they do.

Some feel the police log, in part, has exposed a mental health problem in our community, as featured in this edition of Grove Watch. We agree. The real life concerns we write about in the log, we feel, help educate the community we serve about important issues that need attention from government entities both locally and statewide. It is because of our openness in our police log, regarding mental health issues that we are seeing, that our agency has been asked to represent law enforcement on panels and at seminars, along with writing articles on the subject and explaining our role as police officers dealing with a broken system. As we expose more of what calls officers are handling on a daily basis, only then can we hope for our state, local and community stakeholders to join us in working together towards solutions.

The next time you read a police log, appreciate what our police officers and medical responders are up against. Understand too, that those log entries tell a story, a story about real people dealing with real problems with increasingly challenging odds, a story that badly needs a chapter where they can all be getting the help they need.

Citizen's Academy Apps Now Available

The FGPD is now accepting applications for the 2017 Citizen's Police Academy, a ten week program aimed at fostering partnerships between police and citizens by building understanding and communication about the role of police in our community.

The course meets every Wednesday from 6-9 p.m., February 8 thru April 19, 2016.

Course content includes sessions on patrol procedures, criminal investigations, forensics, and other criminal justice content.

Individuals interested in attending the Citizen's Academy must be a resident of the City of Forest Grove, or regularly employed within the city limits of Forest Grove; be at least 18 years old (with exception of high school students for senior projects); have no felony criminal convictions and no more than one misdemeanor criminal conviction.

Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. on January 15, 2017.

The Academy is limited to 25 seats. Applications are available at the Forest Grove Police Station (2102 Pacific Ave., Forest Grove) or on the City's website: www.forestgrove-or.gov/citizensacademy.



HERE TO SERVE:

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FOREST GROVE OREGON

A place where businesses and families thrive.

www.forestgrove-or.gov
City Hall: 503-992-3200

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